

January 2020

Dear Beloved in Christ,



May grace and peace be yours in abundance (1 Peter 1:2a).

I send you greetings in the Name of the One who is the light of the world, Jesus our Lord, as you gather for your Annual General Congregational Meeting. When you gather together, know that I am filled with gratitude to God for you; that I am thankful for our partnership in the gospel; and, that you continue to be in my prayers as I know I remain in yours.

Since being called to serve as your bishop, October 2012, my prayer has often been the following:

O God, you have called your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown. Give us faith to go forward with good courage, not knowing where we go, but only that your hand is leading us and your love supporting us; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

One of the reasons I love this prayer is because it is realistic but encouraging, honest but hopeful. It doesn't deny difficult truths, but neither does it succumb to sterile pessimism. It was written in the first part of the twentieth century by a Church of England priest named Eric Milner-White. Like many good prayers from another time and place, it sounds like it was tailor made for us here and now.

O God, you have called your servants.... When you meet together, you will be making decisions about your priorities for ministry. You will be adopting budgets that enable ministry that joins in God's mission of reconciliation in the world. You will be supporting your partners in ministry – the rostered ministers of this Synod, and especially those who serve among you as they, first and foremost, seek to equip you for the work of ministry: the building up of the Body of Christ.

Joining God's mission means that your ministry is among the people with whom you live and move and have your being. Your ministry is done each day in the living out of your baptismal identity as God's beloved children through your service in word and deed. Ministry continues beyond the neighborhood and congregation through the many faces of the Church and many facets of its ministries: our Synod and its staff, our National Church expression, the Lutheran World Federation, *En Misión con El Salvador: In Mission with El Salvador*, and our Companion Synod – The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Colombia.

O God, you have called your servants.... Since 2012, at Conference/Area Gatherings, in conversations and sharing during Synod Conventions, and two synod-wide Participating in Hope gatherings, Synod Council has been and continues to intentionally listen and to learn. We have gathered these learnings into four statements:

- We are hearing you are desiring connection and relationship to experience God's love among us all.
- You are eager to risk and test new ways but are concerned about how, and want to ensure we keep our essentials.
- You want practical help in discerning what God is up to because you sense God is at work and present in so many ways.
- This sense of God's acting presence is creating renewed desire to be communities of God's hope-filled people.

Perhaps at this year's Annual General Meeting you might reflect on these four statements and our partnership together, as well as name and give thanks for the gifts and mission into which God has invited you and your congregation. Consider taking a few moments in small groups to listen to each other and then share with all gathered reflections on the following (I would be pleased to receive your comments in writing to forward to Synod Council):

- 1) In what way(s) do these four statements reflect our community of faith?
- 2) If we could make three wishes for the future of our Synod what would they be?
- 3) Share about a time or situation when you or your congregation experienced God's love.
- 4) What resources do you have within your community? Share three gifts God has given you.

O God, you have called your servants.... As you meet, I ask you to prayerfully consider forwarding a tithe (1/10th) of your annual income as a congregation as your minimal offering for Benevolence for the ministry of the Synod and through the Synod to the wider Church. Some congregations have exceeded this mark already, but I would encourage all congregations to set this goal.

O God, you have called your servants.... As you gather be sure to join others across the Synod in reviewing the Synod's 2020 Narrative Budget which follows this correspondence. This is our first attempt to present the Synod's Budget to you in a narrative format. I would be pleased to receive your comments in writing to forward to Synod Council. Please note that at the Fall 2020 Congregational Life Event, October 17, in Red Deer opportunity will be provided to equip congregational treasurers and leaders to prepare a narrative budget for your own congregational context.

O God, you have called your servants.... I have seen so many signs of hope in these few years of serving as your bishop, not just in projects and initiatives and ideas, but in our people:

- in the faithful and dedicated rostered ministers, who are a gift to us all;
- in the diligent and committed staff and officers of the Synod, who it is a joy to work with on a daily and weekly basis, who love the Synod and serving it;
- in the lay leaders of this Synod, serving in various and multitude capacities;
- in the faithful people who hold no particular office or position, but who form the faithful backbone, week after week, that is the body of Christ in the ABT Synod.

You are all not only living, breathing signs of hope, but you also have my profound thanks for all that you do, and it is my privilege to serve with and among you.

O God, you have called your servants.... My prayer is that your gathering will be a recital of gratitude and praise to God for the signs of the Holy Spirit at work in, through, around, and among you.

The God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit (Romans 15:13).

In Christ Jesus-
Shalom,

+The Rev. Dr. Larry Kochendorfer, Bishop
Synod of Alberta and the Territories
Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada

Spirit-Led Leadership Hope-Filled Discipleship Innovative Tradition Collaborative Partnerships



Our Ministry Story 2020

SPIRIT-LED LEADERSHIP



Photo by Colleen McGinnis.

Characterized by trust in the Holy Spirit who
"calls us through the Gospel, enlightens us with
gifts, sanctifies and keeps us in true faith."

HOPE-FILLED DISCIPLESHIP



Photo by Larry Kochendorfer.

Expressed through ministries which embrace the
diversity of all participants and the unity of the body
of Christ working together for the glory of God.

INNOVATIVE TRADITION



Photo by Lincoln Ho.

Embraced and uplifted as an expression of God
at work in and through the Synod.

COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIPS



Photo by James Hendricksen.

Reflect the communion of saints and the interconnected
nature of the Triune God as witness to the restoration,
redemption and reconciliation of the world.

OUR VALUED PARTNERS INCLUDE: Anglican Church of Canada, Calgary Alliance for the Common Good, Canadian Lutheran World Relief, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, Greater Edmonton Alliance, The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Colombia, KAIROS, Lutheran Theological Seminary, Lutheran World Federation, World Council of Churches.



Olav Traa, student intern at Bethel Lutheran, Camrose.

SPIRIT-LED LEADERSHIP

Internship— Preparation for Ministry

Our congregation is truly blessed to serve as an internship site for Olav Traa, student at Lutheran Theological Seminary, Saskatoon!

As Olav learns “on the job” he shares with us the knowledge and skills he is learning at seminary. He rejuvenates our congregational life, connects us to the work of our broader church, and encourages us to think in new ways about our ministry at Bethel. Having an intern allows us to see ourselves through fresh eyes, grow closer to one another, and in a very real sense, serve the church of the future by preparing a student for the work of a pastor.

In the words of Bethel member and Internship Lay Committee participant, Tim Parker: “Having an intern, particularly this one, has added an interesting new dimension to Bethel overall, and I think we are definitely better off because of it.” — *Story: Rev. Dr. Deborah Ann Taylor, Bethel Lutheran, Camrose and Synod Council member.*

HOPE-FILLED DISCIPLESHIP

Area Leadership Teams and Area Gatherings

How do we encourage each other as hope-filled disciples? One way is by gathering as areas in our Synod. Our Area Leadership Teams help us ask some big questions: What is God up to? Where is God leading us? How can we participate in God’s mission together? Our Area Gatherings provide space to share stories: of our congregational struggles, of God at work in unexpected ways and places, of experiments in connecting with our neighbourhoods and communities. In the Southern Area, where our congregations are widely spread apart, the area gathering provides space for relationships to be formed and built. In worshipping, learning and eating together, we are beginning to see that as congregations we are not in this alone, and how we need to hear over and over that God continues to be out in front of us, shaping our stories for the future God imagines for us.

— *Story: Rev. Jeff Decelle, Unity Lutheran, Medicine Hat and Dean-Southern Area Leadership Team.*



Area leadership teams regularly meet online.



Photo by Larry Kochendorfer.

Synod ministry teams gather together annually.

INNOVATIVE TRADITIONS

All Ministry Team Gatherings

Synod Ministry Teams focus on specific areas of ministry within our Synod, such as AIRR (Abiding in Right Relations), CARE (Congregational Action and Response for Mental Health), Campus Ministry, Global Mission, Leadership, Worship and the Arts, and Youth.

Each year, the teams come together for a one-day gathering in Red Deer for meeting time as individual teams, plus time together for worship, updates by the bishop/synod staff, and sharing of information among all the ministry areas. On some years the congregational treasurers also meet with the Synod Treasurer.

Gathering together for this day holds many benefits:

- Strengthened relationships within each ministry team through

face-to-face interaction

- Shared learning among all participants through Dwelling in the Word and other conversations and reflections
- Open and efficient communication between synod staff and ministry teams as information flows in every direction, with opportunities for questions and feedback
- Enhanced networking and collaboration among the various ministry areas

It is an encouraging and uplifting to discover through this time together how and where God continues lead God's people of Alberta and the Territories. — *Story: Carolyn Ethier, Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd, Lethbridge.*

COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIPS

Collaborative Partnership Gatherings

In October 2019, three Collaborative Partnership Gatherings were held in the East and West Central Areas of our Synod. On October 1st, lay and rostered members from 13 congregations were invited to meet at Bethel Lutheran, Camrose to learn and discuss the current realities in this part of our Synod including the pastoral vacancies that were affecting 11 out of the 13 area congregations. Although this meeting was full of the hard realities that these congregations were facing, it was also filled with hope.

Hope was first seen when you walked in the door and saw the high attendance and interest in this meeting from all of the congregations. Hope was in the sharing of our current experience, and the honest conversations that were had. Hope was in the openness that was felt to try new things and to



Photo by Larry Kochendorfer.

Lay and Rostered Leaders gather, representing several congregations.

do things different ways. Hope was in the feeling of comradery at the meeting, expressed through comments made about how we are all in this together. Hope was in the leadership of our Bishop and Assistant to the Bishop, who are with us through this process. This meeting

was the first step in a closer working relationship between our congregations as we work together with the Synod to explore new ways and revisit old ways of collaboration and partnership. *Story: Shae Belanger, Scandia Lutheran, Armena and Synod Council member.*

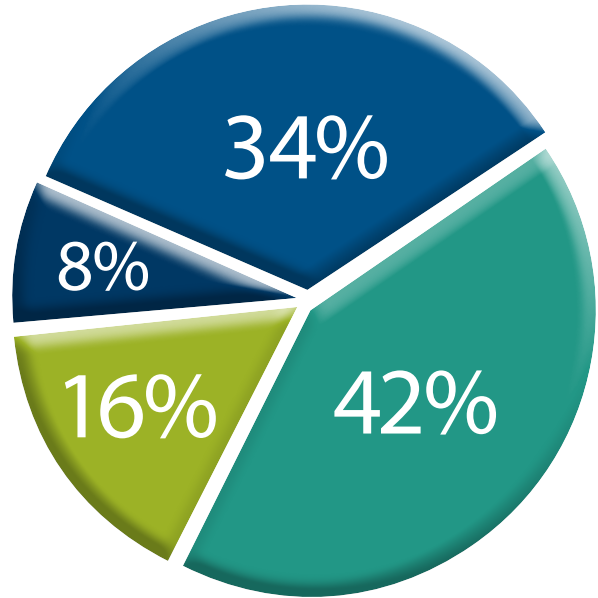


2020 Synod of Alberta and the Territories Budget

The Synod's 2020 budget of **\$721,475** supports ministries carried out under the umbrella of four Mission Priorities.

SPIRIT-LED LEADERSHIP – 42%

- Listening and discernment are modelled by enabling leaders to cultivate a vision for mission and use the gifts entrusted to them by the Holy Spirit.
- Lay and rostered leaders are equipped and empowered to practice the disciplines of Biblical study, prayer, spiritual direction, and Dwelling in the Word.
- Faithful, accountable and wise disciples mentor, encourage, and mutually equip the body of Christ.
- Innovative organizational structures, governance models, and approaches to conflict resolution will reflect the incarnational presence of Jesus.
- Candidates for rostered ministry, who hear the call to serve God in the church, are identified, mentored and provided with support and information.
- Lay and rostered leaders are encouraged to practice a humble openness to God's activities in the world around them.



COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIPS – 34%

- Listening to the Spirit's leadership we are intentional in developing deeper relationships, sharing of resources, and partnership ministries within Areas of the Synod.
- Seeking justice and mercy, ministries collaborate in ventures of service with other groups and agencies to express God's grace and love.
- Serving with the Anglican Church of Canada whenever possible, and strengthening connections to ecumenical and interfaith partnerships, witnessing mutual respect and good stewardship.
- We express and develop a culture of caring conversations, encouragement, hopeful opportunity, and accountability.
- Creative and co-operative experiments are initiated and supported throughout the Synod.
- We work with congregations and ministries of the Synod, other Synods, the ELCIC, and through the ELCIC with International partners.
- We will focus on abiding in right relations with Indigenous Peoples.
- We walk with and learn from our Companion Synod, The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Colombia (IELCO).

HOPE-FILLED DISCIPLESHIP – 16%

- Together in Christ we live with discernment and spiritual practices modeled and taught for faith formation.
- All people, with the uniqueness of their gifts, are welcomed as valued partners in ministry with clear expectations of service.
- Ministries are encouraged to equip, support and inspire one another.
- Stewardship that strengthens the body of Christ is practiced.

INNOVATIVE TRADITION – 8%

- Formative worship that proclaims the Gospel shapes the living of our baptismal vocation and prepares the way for openness to change.
- Creative approaches to ministry are supported with respect and interest.
- Experimentation and risk is encouraged, allowing for flexibility, opportunities for learning, and exciting possibilities.

Thank you for your benevolence offerings, which combined with those received from 102 other congregations across the Synod, are vitally important and crucial to fund the Synod's ministries in 2020.